

My name is Harvey Hubbell and I am an advocate, a filmmaker and I am also dyslexic. I reside in Litchfield, CT and I am in full support of House Bill 6517, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training.

I am one of 45-63 million Americans who have dyslexia. I will never forget my challenges in school when trying to learn to read, write and do math like all of the other students. At age seven I was diagnosed as “dyslexic” but back then that did not mean a whole lot. In the 1960’s-1970’s, educators did not know how to handle students with learning differences. I remember my teachers having a private meeting about me. “He can barely write his first name,” said Mrs. B. “I noticed he doesn’t know how to hold his pencil,” said Mrs. W. They didn’t know I was listening, or maybe they did and didn’t care.

Little was known back then about what to do with a dyslexic student. Testing continued on me, year after year. Testing never ends when you are dyslexic. I learned to read outside of the school system through a series of one-on-one tutors. In 1977 I graduated from Newtown High School. My class rank was 275 out of 325 students. Perhaps I should add that I just barely graduated.

During one of my attempts to go to college, it was confirmed that I was not college material. My English professor excused me from class permanently when he learned that correct spelling and grammar didn’t exist in my writing. My ideas were not judged, but my lack of structure in writing was. “Those skills should have been learned prior to entering college classes! You may be excused now, Mr. Hubbell,” he grumped.

Years later, it became apparent to me that I was born at the wrong time to get help with dyslexia in school. It wasn’t until 1975, a few years before I graduated from high school, that the first laws were passed to identify students with learning differences and to support their rights to education. It was too late for me. At sixteen years old I was already considered damaged goods. I felt that my teachers and others did not understand me. If I had been born later, maybe I would not have had to go through all of the pain and struggles that I experienced in school.

Dyslexics commonly feel alone in their struggles in learning because more often than not, they are expected to learn like the other students. However this does not work so the dyslexic child gets further and further behind and self-confidence suffers. Unfortunately, not all schools in the US currently recognize dyslexia as a specific learning disability or even know what it is. A dyslexic’s fate really depends on the school district in which they live in, the parents and/or advocates, and the teachers. That is why House Bill 6517 is so important as it will look at the implementation of existing Connecticut Dyslexia legislation and make recommendations on needed guidance and support.

If teachers are given the correct tools to identify specific learning differences in their students they can help to insure that the students are put on a path for success.

Growing up in Newtown, my teachers didn't know what to do with me. My parents had to reach out into the community and find tutors to teach me to read. Now, if a child is lucky enough to be diagnosed with dyslexia early on, there are years of evidence-based research to aid in their educational journey. Whether it's through multi-sensory instruction, assistive technology, one-on-one tutoring or a structured language approach, with assistance from their advocate, a child can find the correct form of education to best fit their specific needs.

In my travels and work as a filmmaker I have seen that children who receive interventions from private tutors, are generally from families with the financial ability to pay for this instruction. We need to ensure that no matter what your zip code that you receive (and are entitled) to a free and appropriate education.

Please pass House Bill 6517! I know that it would have benefited me 50 years ago, I hope that it has the chance to do that for Connecticut's dyslexic children today. You have the power to change their fate and create a positive educational experience for all of our states dyslexic students.

Sincerely,
Harvey Hubbell V
Filmmaker, Advocate, Dyslexic
Dislecksia: The Movie